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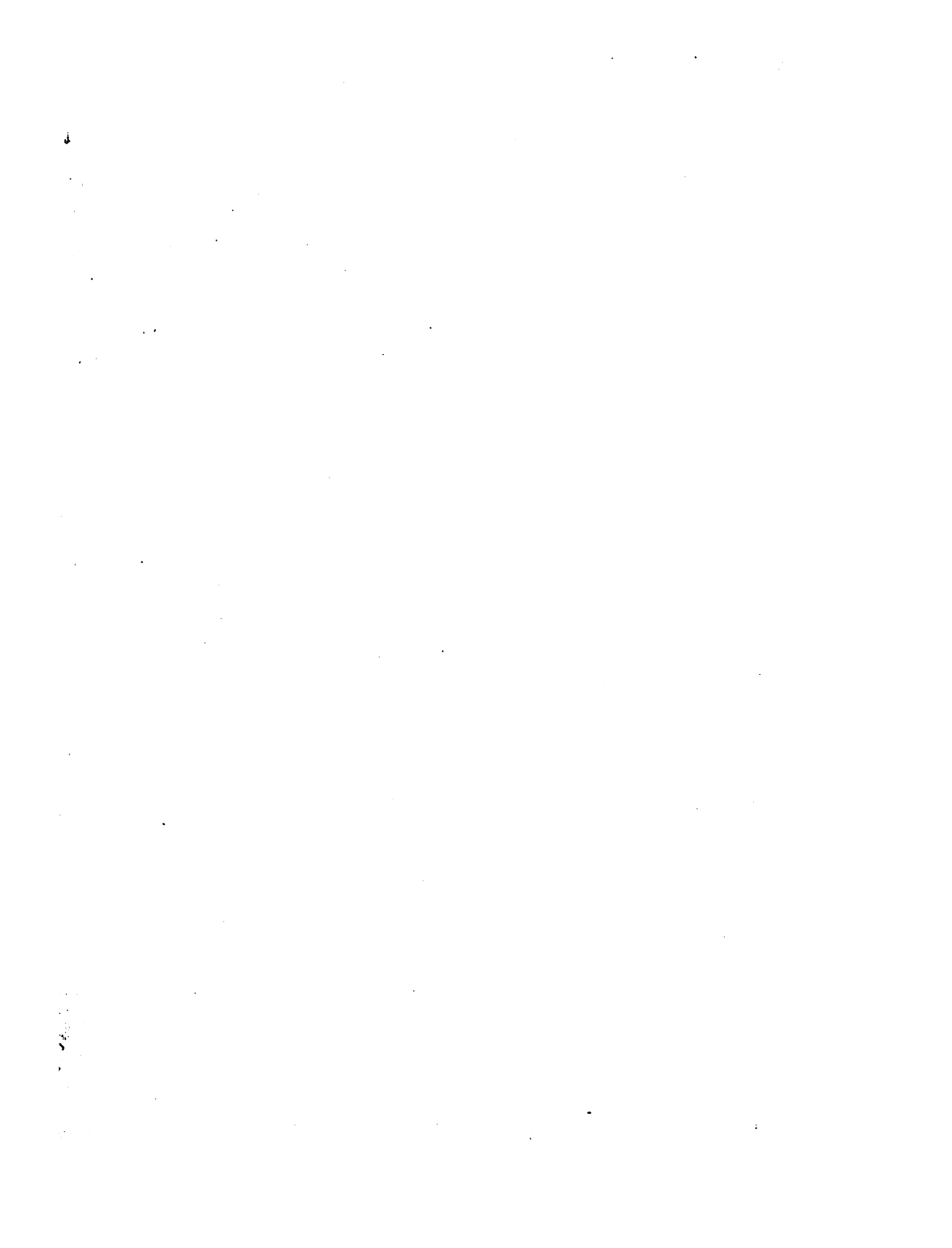
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1877

ARIES 5015 10 SERIA

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WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

FROM A DRAWING BY
SAMUEL LAURENCE.



THACKERAY

BY

G. K. CHESTERTON

AND

LEWIS MELVILLE

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

27 PATERNOSTER ROW

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THACKERAY



From a drawing by Daniel Maclise about 1840
W. M. THACKERAY

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by kind permission of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.)

AMID all the eulogies and all the slanders that are lavished upon the English character, very few people would appear to take any real trouble to obtain a sincere view of it. Rhetorical phrases about its inarticulate strength and nobility do not commonly bring us very much further, for it may be questioned whether it is good for a people excitedly to articulate their own inarticulate disposition. But, when all is said and done, it may truly be said that among all the national temperaments the English is pre-eminently simple and profoundly well-meaning. This well-meaningness combined with this simplicity is responsible for every one of its crimes, and it is the basis of its real and indestructible

magnificence. But this union of moral soundness with mental innocence is responsible also for a certain tendency noticeable in all English life and character: the tendency to get hold of the truth, but to get hold of it falsely; to grasp the fact, but to



From a photo by H. D. Badcock, Ottery St. Mary

LARKBEARE

The home of Thackeray's Mother in Devonshire

is to say, there are, if you choose to put it in that way, more bad cigars smoked in Germany than in England, but that is only because, tobacco being cheaper, more cigars of every kind are smoked. It is as if a Hindoo peasant, who had never seen a jewel in his life, were to say that England was a land of false diamonds. In India



THE CHARTERHOUSE IN THE TIME OF THACKERAY

grasp it somehow by the wrong end. A hundred instances might be given of this. To take a random example. I was taught at my mother's knee, in the intervals of hymns and childish ballads, that Germans smoked bad cigars. I see now that this is true, and yet unfathomably false; that

only the rulers have such things at all; in the Strand any one may have them; and similarly the cigar is in England merely a badge of luxury, while abroad it is often a common possession, like a pipe. In this mere casual instance we have the constant English attitude: the



From a painting by an unknown artist, in the possession of Mrs. Richmond Ritchie
RICHMOND THACKERAY, FATHER OF THE NOVELIST
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W. M. THACKERAY, IN 1822
After the plaster cast by J. Devile
 Collection of Augustin Rischgitz

strong and even humble curiosity which does really know something about foreign nations, but along with it that strange tendency to put the true thing the wrong way round, to seize on the unimportant side of the matter first. It is just as if a foreign critic of England—instead of knowing nothing at all about us, as is usually the case—were to grasp the fact that the most luxurious English people were fox-hunting, and then explain it by saying that these Sybarites had one weird hatred, a venomous hatred of foxes. Such a man would have got the facts right and the truth wrong; and such is our constant national condition with regard to foreign ideas. But there is an even more curious example of it than this, and that is the fact that even in our own discussions,

and in the matter of the great reputations of our own country, we

THACKERAY
AT THE
AGE OF THREE,
with his
Father and Mother,
Mr. and Mrs.
Richmond Thackeray

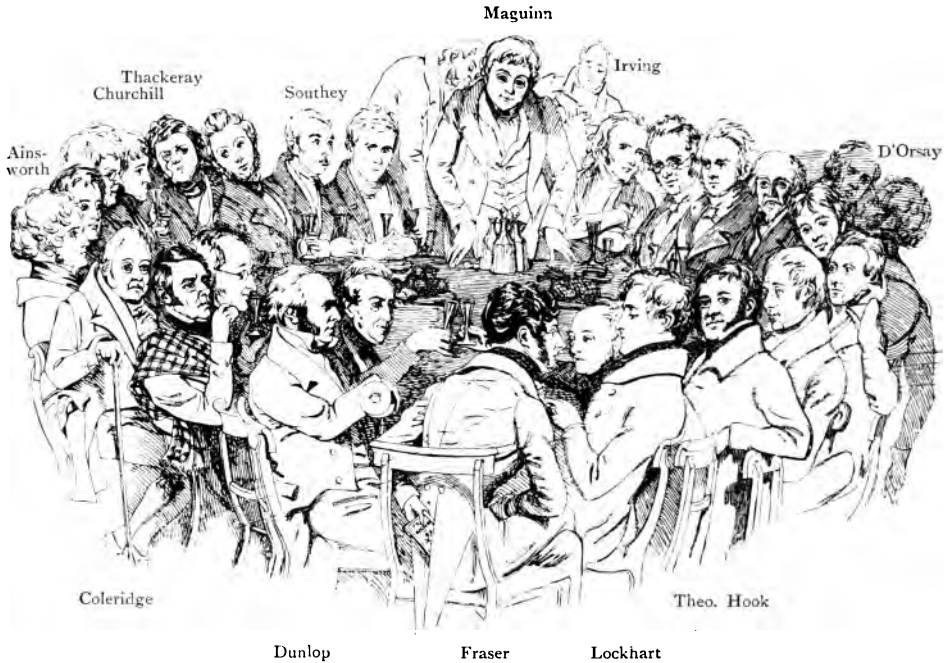
*From a
water-colour sketch
done in India by
Chinnery in 1814, now
in the possession of
Mrs. Richmond Ritchie*

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exhibit this same singular tendency to catch hold of truth only by the tail or the hind leg. Our judgments—that is, our current and conventional judgments—on our great men of genius have a singular disposition to begin in enormous letters with the unimportant defect, and miss in comparison the great merit out of which that defect

THACKERAY



THACKERAY AMONG THE FRASERIANs

Drawn by Daniel Maclise, 1835

arises. Thus, for instance, Englishmen have wearied themselves with asserting that Dickens was vulgar and could not describe a gentleman. Dickens could not describe a gentleman, but he was never vulgar except when he attempted that snobbish and unworthy enterprise. Most men do become vulgar when they describe those who are called vulgar people; and it is precisely here that Dickens was never vulgar—there is no trace of vulgarity about Silas Wegg or Dick Swiveller. The supreme function of Dickens in the universe was to point out that robust and humorous common life is not vulgar, cannot in its nature be vulgar, and the only thing that his countryman can see about him is that he could not describe a member of the upper classes. We might as well say that Michael Angelo never really painted a chartered accountant.

Here again our sincere people have got to the wrong end of the telescope. But of all these examples there is none more perfect and more amusing than the fashion which called Thackeray a cynic. He was a cynic, if the critics will, in the same sense that Leonardo da Vinci was a chemist or Mr. Chamberlain a horticulturalist. But the cynic in him was not merely subordinate to his other characteristics; it was the mere product nay, the by-product—of them. His cynicism was a minor result, a thing left over by his triumphant tendency to sentiment.

Thackeray, from the beginning of his life until the end, consistently and seriously preached a gospel. His gospel, like all deep and genuine ones, may be hard to sum up in a phrase, but if we wished so to sum it up we could hardly express it better than

by saying that it was the philosophy of the beauty and the glory of fools. He believed as profoundly as St. Paul that in the ultimate realm of essential values God made the foolish things of the earth to



From a drawing by Eyre Crowe, A.R.A.

RUE NEUVE ST. AUGUSTIN, PARIS, 1836

(Reproduced from "Thackeray's Haunts and Homes," by kind permission of Messrs. Scribner's Sons and Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.)

confound the wise. He looked out with lucent and terrible eyes upon the world with all its pageants and achievements; he saw men of action, he saw men of genius, he saw heroes; and amid men of action, men of genius, and heroes he saw with absolute sincerity only one thing worth being—a gentleman. And when we understand what he meant by the phrase, the absolute sufficiency of a limpid kindliness, of an obvious and dignified humility, of a softness for noble memories and a readiness for any minute self-sacrifice, we may, without any affected paradox, but rather with serious respect, sum up Thackeray's view of life by saying that amid all the heroes and geniuses he saw only one thing worth being—a fool.

The real falsehood—if there be a falsehood—of Thackeray's view of the world was, in fact, the very opposite of that cynicism and worldliness once attributed to him. In so far as he did misrepresent life, it was rather in the direction of showing too much bold disdain of Vanity Fair and too much absolute faith in the saints, his unworldly women and his easily swindled gentlemen. He permitted this pietism of his to blind him to the vivid atrocities of the character of Helen Pendennis, supposing that her having lived all her life in a country homestead was some kind of preventive against cruelty and paganism and heathen pride. Thackeray is, if anything, too much on the side of the angels. He was a monk who rushed out of his monastery to cry out against a gaudy masquerade that was roaring around it, and ever since his monk's frock has been mistaken for one of the masquerade dresses and applauded as the best joke in the whole fancy dress ball.

There are, of course, exceptions, or what may appear to be exceptions, to such a generalisation. So deep and genuine was Thackeray's insight into the normal human spirit that he detected this element of idealism where it might least be expected. The



W. M. THACKERAY

From a portrait painted by Frank Stone in 1836, in the possession of Mrs. Richmond Ritchie,
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NO. 18, ALBION STREET, HYDE PARK
The residence of Thackeray's mother, where the novelist
lived for a time on his return from Paris in 1837

character of Major Pendennis, for instance, is simply a great lighthouse or beacon tower, not merely of social satire, but of eternal ethical philosophy. In Major Pendennis, consciously or unconsciously, is traced the valuable truth that almost every man is, by the nature of things, an idealist. To go to great houses, to wear the latest and yet the most dignified attire, to know the right people, to do and say at every instant the thing which is most perfectly and exquisitely ordinary, this is a principle of life against which a sane man might have

a great deal to say; but one thing he could not say, he could not say that it is materialistic. One moral merit it has: at least it is totally useless. A place in Society is not something to drink; an invitation card from Lord Steyne is not something to eat. Poor old Pendennis did not sleep softer in his incomparable clothing; he was a poor man, lonely and constantly troubled. Nothing supported him but his own monstrous and insane religion. He was, as it were, a glorious heretic, a martyr to false gods; and nothing sadder or more honourable has ever been conceived in fiction than that scene in the end of "Pendennis," in which the old man, having, with a valour and energy that stirs us like a cavalry charge, defeated all machinations that would have robbed his nephew of name and fame, suddenly finds the nephew himself ready to fling down the whole

laborious edifice in the name of an unintelligible scruple. "And Shakespeare was right, and Cardinal Wolsey, begad. If I had served my God as I've served you——" It has the pathos of the meeting of two faiths; the good Moslem staring at the good Crusader.

This was the greatness of Thackeray, the man whom sentimentalists without hearts or stomachs have conceived as a mere satirist, that he felt, perhaps, more fully and heavily than any other Englishman the immeasurable and almost unbearable emotion that is involved in the mere fact of human life. Dickens, with his indestructible vanity and boyishness, is always looking forward. Thackeray is always looking back in life. And no man will ever properly comprehend him until he has reached for a moment that state of the soul in which melancholy is the greatest of all the joys.



NO. 13, GREAT CORAM STREET, BRUNSWICK SQUARE

Thackeray's residence from 1837 to 1840, where "The Paris Sketch-Book" was written

G. K. CHESTERTON.

Thackeray

Jerrold



DRAWING FROM *PUNCH*: AUTHORS' MISERIES, No. 6

THE CHARACTERS AND PLACES OF THACKERAY'S BOOKS

“SINCE the author of ‘Tom Jones’ was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to the utmost of his power a MAN. We must drape him and give him a certain conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art. Many ladies have remonstrated and subscribers left me, because, in the course of the story, I described a young man resisting and affected by temptation. My object was to say, that he had the passions to feel, and the manliness and generosity to overcome them. You will not hear—it is best to know it—what



De La Pluche M. A. Titmarsh Major Gahagan
"COMIC TALES AND SKETCHES"



W. M.
THACKERAY

*From a
terra-cotta bust
by
Sir Edgar Boehm, R.A.
after the plaster
cast by
Joseph Durham*

In the
National Portrait
Gallery

moves in the real world, what passes in society, in the clubs, colleges, mess-rooms,—what is the life and talk of your sons. A little more frankness than is customary has been attempted in this story; with no bad desire on the writer's part, it is hoped, and with no ill-consequence to any reader. If truth is not always pleasant, at any rate truth is best, from whatever chair—from those whence graver writers or thinkers argue, as from that at which the storyteller sits as he concludes his labour, and bids his kind reader farewell." So runs a passage in the preface to "Pendennis."

"If truth is not always pleasant, at any rate truth is best."

There, in a sentence, is the secret underlying all Thackeray's work. The novelist is inclined to portray the men and women of fiction rather than the men and women of life. This fault of his weaker brethren of the quill Thackeray avoided. His characters are always human. There are no immaculate heroes, no perfect heroines, no utterly unredcemed scoundrels of either sex to be met with in the pages of his books. He conceived it to be his

WILLIAM
MAKEPEACE
THACKERAY

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duty to describe the world as he saw it, and to draw the men and women he knew. If he has nowhere joined pure goodness to pure intelligence, if he has not bestowed on any woman the humour of Becky Sharp *and* the simplicity of Amelia Sedley, it is because he had never met this union of forces in life. To have described the unreal and passed it off as the real would have been an offence against the pen which was able to boast:

Stranger! I never writ a flattery,
Nor signed the page that registered a lie.

“I cannot help telling the truth as I view it, and describing what I see. To describe it otherwise than it seems to me would be falsehood in that calling in which it has pleased Heaven to place me; treason to that conscience which says that men are weak; that truth must be told; that faults must be owned; that pardon must be prayed for; and that Love reigns supreme over all.” This is Thackeray’s confession of literary faith.

“My object is not to make a perfect character of anything like it,” he wrote to his mother when “Vanity Fair” was appearing in monthly parts. “Our friend is not Amadis or Sir Charles Grandison,” he wrote of Philip Firmin, “and I don’t for a moment set him up as a person to be revered or imitated, but try to draw him faithfully as Nature made him.”

The late Anthony Trollope stigmatised Thackeray as an unmethodical writer. Certainly the great man, as author, bound himself by no hard and fast rules. His plan was to create mentally two or three of his chief characters and write from page to page, with only a general notion of the course he would be taking a few chapters later. But then to compensate for the lack of method he lived with his characters, shared their joys and sorrows, and spoke of them as if they were real creatures of flesh and blood. “Being entirely occupied with my two new friends, Mrs. Pendennis and



THE STRANGERS' ROOM, REFORM CLUB
Showing the portrait of Thackeray by Samuel Laurence, and busts of Sir William Molesworth and Charles Buller
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Committee of the Reform Club)



NO. 13 (now 16), YOUNG STREET,
KENSINGTON

Thackeray's home from 1846 to 1853, where "Vanity Fair,"
"Pendennis," and "Esmond" were written

her son Arthur Pendennis, he wrote to Mrs. Brookfield from Brighton in 1849, "I got up very early again this morning. He is a very good-natured, generous young fellow, and I begin to like him considerably. I wonder if he is interesting to me from selfish reasons, and because I fancy we resemble each other in many parts." "I wonder what will happen to Pendennis and Fanny Bolton," he remarked in another letter to the same correspondent; "writing and sending it to you, somehow it seems as if it were true." Mrs.

Ritchie remembers entering her father's study one morning about

two years later and being motioned away, and how, an hour later, he went to the school-room and, half-laughing, half-ashamed, said: "I do not know what James can have thought of me when he came in with the tax-gatherer after you left, and found me blubbering over Helen Pendennis's death."

"I don't control my characters," he asserted one day. "I am in their hands, and they take me where they please." And when a friend remonstrated with him for having made Esmond marry "his mother-in-law," he only replied: "I didn't make him do it; they did it themselves." It may be because the characters were so real to the creator that they live in the memory of the reader. If Thackeray was the first to shed tears over the death of Helen, certainly he has not been the last. Who can read with dry eyes,

of the reconciliation of mother and son at the death-bed? "As they were talking the clock struck nine, and Helen reminded him how, when he was a little boy, she used to go up to his bed-room at that hour and hear him say Our Father. And once more, oh once more, the young man fell down at his mother's sacred knees, and sobbed out the prayer which the Divine Tenderness uttered for us, and which has been echoed for twenty ages since by millions of sinful and humble men. And as he spoke the last words of the supplication, the mother's head fell down on her boy's, and her arms closed around him, and together they repeated the words 'for ever and ever' and 'Amen.'"

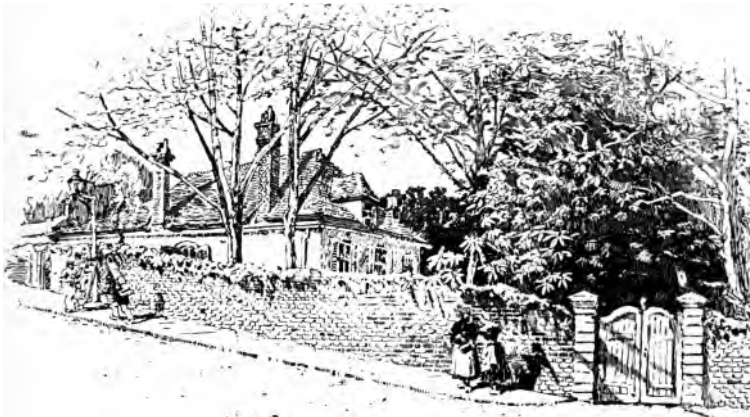
Readers of Thackeray's works must have noticed how frequently the characters reappear in tales other than that in which they are first introduced. Reference is made to them and to their doings in book after book, until we feel that we know them personally. Thackeray loved to reintroduce his old friends, and it was his intention—frustrated by an all too early death—to write a novel of the times of Henry V., in which the ancestors of his Pendennises and Warringtons should have foregathered. A long and fascinating article might be written tracing the subsequent careers of the characters from the glances we obtain of them at odd moments.

How many novelists are there who have such a gallery of



NO. 36, ONSLOW SQUARE, BROMPTON

Where Thackeray lived from 1853 to 1862, during which period he wrote the "Lectures on the Georges," the end of "The Newcomes," "The Virginians," part of "Philip," and many of the "Roundabout Papers."



From a drawing by Eyre Crowe, A.R.A.

CHÂTEAU DE BREQUERECQUE, BOULOGNE-SUR-MER, 1854

(Reproduced from "Thackeray's Haunts and Homes," by kind permission of Messrs. Scribner's Sons and Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.)

characters as can be collected from Thackeray's books? What admirable realism! What marvellous insight into the natures of men and women!

In his earlier years,

however, he was too bitter, and his stories contain far too many scoundrels. "I don't know where I get all these rascals for my books," he said apologetically; "I have certainly never lived with such people." "The Yellowplush Correspondence" does not contain a single man or woman we should like to meet. Yellowplush is a scamp; Dawkins is silly and snobbish; Blewitt, the cardsharp, is a bully and a fool; Lady Griffin is not pleasant, and though she is badly treated, her revenge is too cruel; the Earl of Crabs—the creation of a master hand—is a terrible man, whose sense of humour only makes him more dangerous; and Deuceace himself, cardsharp, swindler, fortune-hunter . . . yet with such a father what was he to become? The foolish Mathilda demands some pity; for at least she is loyal to the man who married her only because he thought she had money: "My Lord, my place is with him."

Who will record the unwritten chapters of the life of the Honourable Algernon Percy Deuceace? There is plenty of material, if not for authentic history, at least for legitimate speculation. It

is known that at Lord Bagwig's the Honourable Algie won from young Tom Rook the sum of thirty pounds; that with his friend Mr. Ringwood (who, with the invaluable assistance of his hostess, trapped the commercial traveller, Pogson, into the signing of bills for huge amounts at the house of Madame la Baronne de Florval-Delval, *née* de Melval-Norval) he won heavily at the card-table from Mr. Vanjohn; and that with Blundell-Blundell

MR.
MICHAEL
ANGELO
TITMARSH
as he
appeared
at
Willis's Rooms
in his
celebrated character
of
Mr. Thackeray

*From
a sketch
by
John Leech*



(who was up at Oxford with Arthur Pendennis) he contrived to swindle Colonel Altamont. Then there is the paragraph in "*Galignan's Messenger*," quoted in the last chapter of "A Shabby Genteel Story": "Married at the British Embassy, by Bishop Luxcombe, Andrew Fitch, Esq., to Marianne Caroline Matilda, widow of the late Antony Carrickfergus, of Lombard Street, and Gloucester Place, Esquire. . . . Miss Runt officiated as bridesmaid; and we remarked among the company Earl and Countess Crabs, General Sir Rice Curry, K.C.B., Colonel Wapshot, Sir Charles Swang, the Hon. Algernon Percy Deuceace and his lady, Count Punter, and others of the *élite* of the fashionables now in Paris. The bridegroom was attended by his friend Michael Angelo Titmarsh, Esq., and the lady was given away by the Right Hon. the Earl of Crabs. . . ." Had the Hon. Mrs. Deuceace forgiven her husband the blow in the *Bois*, with the account of which the adventure of Mr. Deuceace at Paris concluded? Was the younger couple reconciled to the elder? and if so, by what means? As the author does not solve the problem, each reader must do so for himself.

"Catherine," a satire upon the "Newgate Novels," naturally contains a collection of jail-birds; and these, of course, are not treated as they would have been by Ainsworth or Bulwer Lytton, but are shown in all their hideousness. "A Shabby Genteel Story" is a very fine piece of work, but its theme is unpleasant—the trapping into a mock marriage of trusting Cinderella—and the characters objectionable: Mr. and Mrs. Gann and the Misses Macarty; Brandon, Tufthunt, and Cinqbars. Fitch is the one honest person, save the heroine, and he is vulgar. Tufthunt is, perhaps, the worst man Thackeray ever depicted, for Sir Francis Clavering is weak rather than vile, and Brandon—the Dr. Firmin of "Philip"—suffers from a moral sense so perverted that he cannot realise his own weakness.

The rascal Fitz-Boodle is a humorist of the first water. His iniquity was the writing of those scandalous chronicles of his friends' private lives, "Men's Wives," which tell of the scoundrel Walker, the blackguard Boroski, and the selfish, vain, and terribly vulgar Mrs. Dennis Haggarty. The stories of "Dorothea" and "Ottilia," however, are agreeable enough. Even "Barry Lyndon," one of the author's masterpieces, is a disagreeable story. This, indeed, Thackeray fully realised. "You need not read it," he said to his eldest daughter; "you would not like it." The villain Barry, who never realises that he is not a hero, and his foolish wife, are only in part counter-balanced by Barry's vulgar, loving mother, who goes to him in the day of his ruin and nurses him until he dies of *delirium tremens* in the nineteenth year of his



See note on page 40.



From the painting by Samuel Laurence in the National Portrait Gallery

W. M. THACKERAY

residence in the Fleet prison.

After "Barry Lyndon" appeared "Vanity Fair," "Pendennis," "The Newcomes," "Esmond," and "The Virginians," which contain so vast a number of characters that it is impossible to treat of them one by one.

"Wherever shines the sun, you are sure to find Folly basking in it. Knavery is the shadow at Folly's heels," Thackeray wrote in the character sketch of "Captain Rook and Mr. Pigeon." It seems as if he had not quite grasped the fact that there were other things than

folly and knavery to write about, and that a surfeit of rogues has an unpleasant after-effect. "Oh! for a little manly, honest, God-relying simplicity, cheerful, affected, and humble!" he had prayed in one of his earliest reviews; but it was only with "Vanity Fair" that he began to *give* it.

It has been stated by more than one critic that Thackeray could not depict a good woman, and that those that were without blemish were also without any attractive qualities. Yet Helen Pendennis was a good woman, a good wife, and a good mother; and Laura Bell was clever as well as good; and certainly Ethel Newcome

was not a fool; nor Theo and Kitty Lambert other than good and true women. It seems strange that while his female readers can forgive him Becky Sharp, greatest of adventuresses, and can tolerate even Blanche Amory of "Mes Larmes," they cannot pardon him Amelia Sedley. There are many other admirable sketches. Mrs. Peggy O'Dowd, lion-hearted, loyal and wise enough; the Dowager Countess of Southdown, Mrs. Bute Crawley, Miss Briggs, Miss Crawley, the lovable Catherine (the "Little Sister" of "Philip"); Miss Fotheringay and Fanny Bolton, who ensnared the affections of young Pendennis—what man has not met one or both of these?—Madame de Florac, the old lady with the beautiful face; the terrible Campaigner; Mrs. Warrington, who preferred to be known as Madame Esmond; Lady Castlewood, tender, loving, unreasoning, who can rise to the dignity of a great situation: "My daughter may receive presents from the Head of our House; my daughter may thankfully take kindnesses from her father's, her mother's, her brother's dearest friend; and be grateful



From a photograph

W. M. THACKERAY

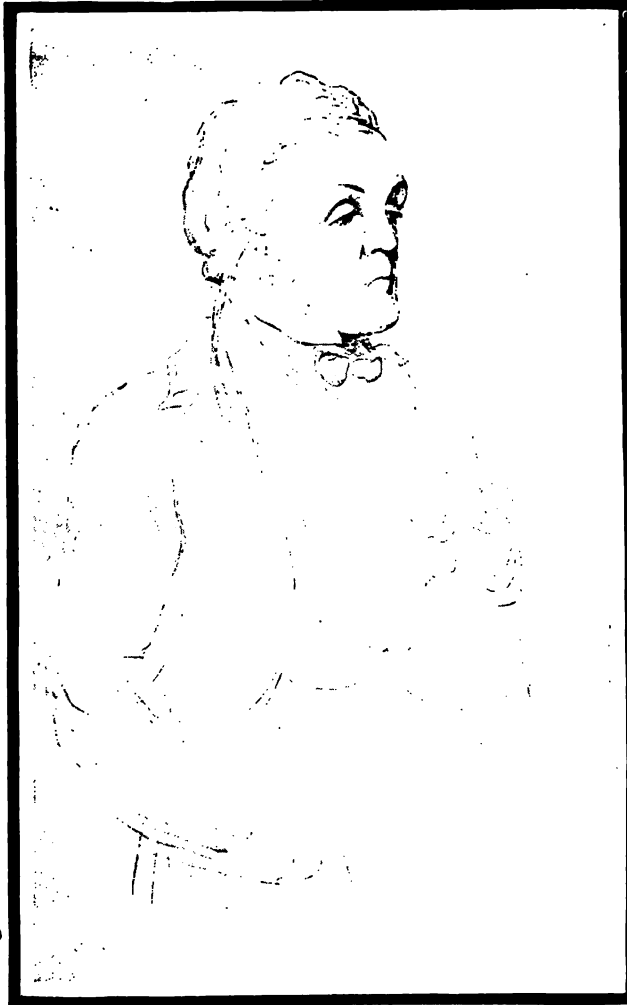
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for one more benefit besides the thousand we owe him"; and, above all, irresistible, wayward Trix—that contradiction in words, an ambitious woman. So alluring is Beatrix that it is absurd to expect any man to think that she was ever all bad. Who knows but that if Harry Esmond had been a little less sensitive of his own demerits, and had let her see him as he was, they might have married and lived as happy as most couples? But her chance of redemption passed, and Beatrix became the Madame de Bernstein of "The Virginians."

Thackeray's men are no whit less successful. George Osborne and his purse-proud father; old Mr. Sedley and Jos; Sir Pitt Crawley—that most daring piece of character drawing—and his sons, Pitt and Rawdon; Pendennis and "Bluebeard," as Lady Rockingham called George Warrington; little Bows; the valet, Morgan; Clive Newcome and his cousin, the little bounder, Sir Barnes; the Virginians, Harry and George; the inimitable Foker and the irrepressible Costigan. Thackeray drew gentlemen in a way that has never been excelled and rarely equalled. "They [the Kickleburys] are travelling with Mr. Bloundell, who was a gentleman once, and still retains about him some faint odour of that time of bloom." "It is true poor Plantagenet [Gaunt] is only an idiot . . . a zany, . . . and yet you see he is a gentleman." And the author makes the reader see it is so. In spite of the debaucheries and his behaviour to his family, the Marquis of Steyne is always *grand seigneur*. Esmond is a gentleman, and so is the intriguing Major Pendennis, Half-Pay; and Florac and Dobbin, and the little-worldly-wise Colonel Newcome. It has been said that the Colonel is too good for this world, too innocent, too ignorant, too transparently a child of nature, yet surely the noble-hearted man is human and true. Indeed, by this one character alone Thackeray could take his place among the masters. The whole gallery of his creations places him at the head of the



THE WRITING TABLE AND CHAIR USED BY THACKERAY AT YOUNG STREET, ONSLOW SQUARE, AND PALACE GREEN
Reproduced by kind permission of Mrs. Richmond Ritchie



From a pencil drawing by Richard Doyle in the British Museum
W. M. THACKERAY

English novelists of the nineteenth century.

A paper dealing with Thackeray's characters may not ignore the question of the "originals." Great interest has always been taken in Thackeray's originals. Much has been written about them which is worth reading; much also has been written that is misleading. The novelist was personal sometimes, but it was seldom that he modelled a character on a man or woman of his acquaintance. He told his daughters that he never wilfully copied anyone; and there is no reason to disbelieve his statement. The Marquis of

Steyne was a sublimation of half a dozen characters, and so were Captain Shandon and Costigan; and Becky, Dobbin, Jos Sedley, and Colonel Newcome were wholly original from the celebrity point of view at least. Many of the people in "Esmond" are portraits of historical personages—the Duke of Hamilton, Lord Mohun, and

Beatrix, for instance—but in the tales of modern life there are few characters that can be traced to any particular source. “You know you are only a piece of Amelia. My mother is another half; my poor little wife *y'est pour beaucoup*,” the author wrote to Mrs. Brookfield. Edmund Yates always insisted that Wagg in



Painted by Sir John Gilbert, R.A., and presented to the Garrick Club
A POSTHUMOUS PORTRAIT OF THACKERAY
Collection of Augustin Rischgitz

“Pendennis” stood for Theodore Hook; that Lord Lonsdale was the original of Major Pendennis’s noble friend Lord Colchicum; and that Bunn was the model for Dolphin, the theatrical manager.



From a photograph by Ernest Edwards

W. M. THACKERAY

It has been said that Mr. J. M. Evans, the publisher, was portrayed in “The Kickleburys on the Rhine”; that Mr. Flam in “Mrs. Perkins’s Ball” was a portrait of Abraham Hayward; that the Rev. W. H. Brookfield stood for the curate, Frank Whitestock; that Leigh Hunt was the original of Gandish in “The Newcomes”; and that the third Marquis of Hertford was the prototype of Lord Steyne. Mrs. Ritchie once saw the young lady who was supposed to have suggested Becky Sharp to her father; and Carlyle and his wife knew—and disliked—the original Blanche Amory.

Thackeray was not topographical in the



A PAGE OF THACKERAY'S MANUSCRIPT
 Showing an original sketch in the margin
 (Reproduced from "Denis Duval," by kind permission of Mrs. Richmond Ritchie)

sense that Dickens was. Often the briefest mention of a street satisfied him. Yet somehow the places of the principal scenes of his novels linger in the memory. As a young man he studied at Weimar, and later, while serving his apprenticeship both to art and letters, he resided from time to time at Paris. Had he never visited Germany, perhaps Amelia and Jos and Dobbin would not have gone Am Rhein, and the chapter about Becky and the Pumpernickel students would never have been written. Many of his characters went to Paris, which had for him a strong personal interest. It was there he wooed and won his wife. It was at



From a photo by H. N. King, Avenue Road, W.

THE HOUSE AT NO. 2, PALACE GREEN, KENSINGTON, IN WHICH THACKERAY DIED

Paris that he wrote the autobiographical verse in the ballad which tells of the Bouillabaisse served at Terré's Tavern in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs :

Ah me ! how quick the days are
fitting !

I mind me of a time that's gone,
When here I'd sit, as now I'm
sitting,

In this same place—but not alone.
A fair young form was nestled
near me,

A dear dear face looked fondly up,
And sweetly spoke and smiled to
cheer me,

—There's no one now to share
my cup.

“I have been to the Hotel de la Terrasse, where Becky used to live, and shall pass by Captain Osborne's lodgings,” he wrote from Paris to Mrs. Brookfield. “I believe perfectly in all these people, and feel quite an interest in the inn in which they lived.” It was at Brussels, in the Church of St. Gudule, the church in which he was christened, that Esmond met the inveterate intriguer, Father Holt, masquerading in a green uniform as a captain in the Bavarian Elector's service ; and in the convent cemetery knelt before the cross which marked the grave of Sœur Mary Madeleine, the unhappy Lady Castlewood, who was his mother. In that same city many years later the author of “Vanity Fair,” not claiming to rank among the military novelists, took his place with the non-combatants while the armies marched to the field of Waterloo, and portrayed many

folk with anxious hearts awaiting news that must bring them happiness or misery. "No more firing was heard at Brussels—the pursuit rolled miles away. The darkness came down on the field and city; and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart."

Thackeray was pre-eminently the novelist of the upper classes, and as a natural result the majority of his characters lived in the West End of London, chiefly in the area enclosed by Park Lane, Oxford Street, Bond Street, and Piccadilly, known as Mayfair. But no part of the metropolis escaped him. The Sedleys lived in Russell Square before they removed to St. Adelaide's Villas, Anna Maria Road, West, "where the houses look like baby-houses; where the people looking out of the first floor windows must infallibly, as you think, sit with their feet in the parlours; where the shrubs in the little gardens in front bloom with a perennial display of little children's pinafores, little red socks, caps, etc. (polyandria polygyria); whence you hear the sound of jingling spirits and women singing; whither of evenings you see city clerks plodding wearily. . . ." Dr. Firmin practised in Old Parr Street; and Colonel Newcome and James Binnie, on their return from India, rented a house in Fitzroy Square. Bungay and Bacon carried on their business in Paternoster Row, and lived over their shops. It was to the sponging house in Cursitor Street that Rawdon



THACKERAY'S GRAVE IN KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY





From the statuette by Sir Edgar Boehm, R.A.

W. M. THACKERAY

Crawley was taken after the ball at Gaunt House. Among others, Pendennis and Warrington lived in the Temple; while Colonel Newcome and his son, Dr. Firmin and Philip, Pendennis, young Rawdon—to name a few—were educated at the Charterhouse. “The Newcomes” immortalised that public school, and earned for the author the well-deserved title of “Carthusianus Carthusianorum.” The clubs and Bohemian resorts of the day were introduced into the various stories: the visit of Colonel Newcome to the “Cave of Harmony” is not easily forgotten. In Mayfair was situated Gaunt House, and in Curzon Street, near by, Becky and Rawdon practised the art of living on nothing a year. It was in the Curzon Street house that Becky is made to admire



her husband, when he gives Lord Steyne the chastisement that *ruins* her for life. "When I wrote that sentence," Thackeray remarked subsequently, "I slapped my fist on the table and said, 'That is a stroke of genius.'"

LEWIS MELVILLE.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

**William
Makepeace
Thackeray**
see frontispiece

**Richmond
Thackeray,
Father of the
Novelist**
see page 3

**Thackeray at the
age of three, with
his father and
mother**
see page 5

**The Charterhouse
in the time of
Thackeray**
see page 2

**Thackeray, from
the replica of a
plaster cast by
J. Devile**
see page 4

William Makepeace Thackeray, the only child of Richmond and Anne Thackeray, was born at Calcutta on July 18th, 1811. He was descended from Yorkshire yeomen who for several generations had been settled at Hampsthwaite, in the West Riding. In 1766 his grandfather, likewise named William Makepeace Thackeray, sailed for India at the age of seventeen, to enter the service of the East India Company. Under Cartier, the predecessor of Warren Hastings as Governor of Bengal, his promotion was very rapid. In 1776 he married Amelia Richmond, and the same year returned to England. His fourth son, Richmond Thackeray, father of the novelist, went to India in 1798 also in the service of the Company. In 1807 he became Secretary to the Board of Revenue at Calcutta, and undoubtedly possessed brilliant gifts for administration and public work. He married on October 13th, 1810, the reigning beauty of Calcutta, Anne, daughter of John Harman Becher. The painting by Chinnery, executed in 1814, gives a glimpse of the Thackerays at the time when their son had reached the age of three years. He is drawn perched on a large pile of books, with his arms round his mother's neck, his father stiffly seated in a chair close by.

Richmond Thackeray was at this time Collector of the district called the Twenty-four Pergunnahs. Two years later he died, and in 1817 his son was sent to England to be educated, and was placed in the charge of his aunt Mrs. Ritchie, who first sent him to a school in Hampshire, and then to the establishment of Dr. Turner at Chiswick. About 1818 Mrs. Richmond Thackeray married a second time, and in 1821 returned to England with her husband, Major Carmichael Smyth, and settled at Addiscombe. The following year Thackeray was sent to the Charterhouse, where he remained until 1828. This famous school figured largely in his writings as "Greyfriars." It was here that Colonel Newcome and Clive, Pendennis, George Osborne, Philip Firmin, and Rawdon Crawley were educated. Charterhouse was the scene of Thackeray's fight with Venables, in which he sustained the unfortunate accident to his nose that caused a permanent disfigurement in his otherwise handsome countenance. Evidence of this is noticeable in the plaster cast executed by J. Devile, which represents Thackeray at the age of eleven.



Larkbeare,
the home of
Thackeray's
mother

see page 2

In 1825 Thackeray's mother removed to Larkbeare, a house situated a mile and a half from Ottery St. Mary, where her son used to spend his holidays. On leaving school he remained at Larkbeare until he took up his residence at Trinity College, Cambridge, in February 1829. The scenery surrounding his mother's home is described in "Pendennis," Ottery St. Mary, Exeter, and Sidmouth figuring respectively as Clavering St. Mary, Chatteris, and Baymouth.

While at Cambridge Thackeray contributed to a small paper called *The Snob*, a literary and scientific journal not conducted by members of the University. In it appeared "Timbuctoo," a mock poem on the subject chosen for the Chancellor's medal, won that year by Alfred Tennyson. In 1829 Thackeray spent the long vacation in Paris, and left college after the following Easter term.

Having inherited a fortune from his father, it was arranged that he should finish his education by travelling abroad for a couple of years. Accordingly he spent several months at Dresden, Rome, Paris, and Weimar, and finally resolved to study for the Bar on his return to England. In 1831 he entered the Middle Temple, and by November of that year was settled in chambers in Hare Court. On coming of age, however, he abandoned all pretence of following the profession he had chosen, and made his way to Paris, whence he wrote letters for *The National Standard*, and collected material for miscellaneous articles. Having speedily lost the greater part of his fortune, he turned his thoughts seriously to painting as a means of livelihood, and at this period frequented various studios, probably working in the atelier of Gros. Later he copied pictures assiduously at the Louvre, but though he delighted in the art he failed to acquire any great technical skill as a draughtsman.

In January 1835 Thackeray appeared as one of the Fraserians in a sketch drawn by Maclise and published in *Fraser's Magazine*. This celebrated cartoon depicts the Fraser writers at one of the frequent banquets held at 212, Regent Street. It was in this company that Thackeray first gained distinction as an author.

In 1836 he was appointed Paris correspondent of *The Constitutional*, and in August of the same year he married Miss Shawe. The wedding took place at the British Embassy, Bishop Luscombe, at that time chaplain, officiating at the ceremony. The newly married couple lived in apartments in the Rue Neuve St. Augustin, a street quite close by the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, where is situated the restaurant made famous in the "Ballad of Bouillabaisse."

The Constitutional came to an end in 1837, and Thackeray returned to London and took up his abode for a time at 18, Albion Street, Hyde Park, where his mother was then living, and where he had stayed in 1834 when first contributing to *Fraser's Magazine*. Anne Isabella Thackeray, his eldest daughter, was born at this house. A removal was made not long afterwards to No. 13, Great Coram Street, Brunswick Square, where the Thackerays lived for some years. During this period "The Paris Sketch-Book" was written, being published in 1840 by Macrone. Owing to the misfortune of his wife's illness the author's household became unsettled, and about 1843 the home at Great Coram Street was given up.

Thackeray
among the
Fraserians

see page 6

Rue Neuve
St. Augustin,
Paris

see page 7

No. 18,
Albion Street,
Hyde Park

see page 10

No. 13, Great
Coram Street,
Brunswick
Square

see page 11



"Comic Tales
and Sketches"
see page 13

Thackeray had published in 1841 a collection of "Comic Tales and Sketches, edited and illustrated by Mr. Michael Angelo Titmarsh," with a preface dated "Paris, April 1st, 1841," from which the following is an extract :

When there came to be a question of republishing the tales in these volumes, the three authors, Major Gahagan, Mr. Fitzroy Yellowplush, and myself, had a violent dispute upon the matter of editing ; and at one time we talked of editing each other all round. The toss of a halfpenny, however, decided the question in my favour. . . . On the title-page the reader is presented with three accurate portraits of the authors of these volumes. They are supposed to be marching hand-in-hand, and are just on the very brink of Immortality.

During the same year "The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond" commenced to run its course in *Fraser's Magazine*. *Punch* had been started on July 17th, and Thackeray's first contributions appeared the following June. In the course of his ten years' connection with this periodical he contributed something like 500 sketches irrespective of letterpress. One of these, reproduced on page 12, is taken from a series entitled "Authors' Miseries," and represents Jerrold and the artist himself in a railway carriage listening to the other occupants discussing the members of the *Punch* staff :—

Drawing from
"Punch":
"Authors'
Miseries"
see page 12

Old Gentleman, Miss Wiggets, Two Authors:

Old Gentleman: "I am so sorry to see you occupied, my dear Miss Wiggets, with that trivial paper, *Punch*. A railway is not a place, in my opinion, for jokes. I never joke—never."

Miss W.: "So I should think, sir."

Old Gentleman: "And besides, are you aware who are the conductors of that paper, and that they are Chartists, Deists, Atheists, Anarchists, to a man? I have it from the best authority, that they meet together once a week in a tavern in St. Giles's, where they concoct their infamous print. The chief part of their income is derived from threatening letters, which they send to the nobility and gentry. The principal writer is a returned convict. Two have been tried at the Old Bailey; and as for their artist—as for their artist. . . ."

Guard: "Swin-dun ! Station !"

[*Exeunt two Authors.*]

In the latter half of 1842 Thackeray made a tour in Ireland, and recorded his experiences in "The Irish Sketch-Book," which made its appearance the following year.

Thackeray, who for some time had been a member of the Garrick Club, was elected to the Reform in 1840, being proposed by Mr. Martiu Thackeray and seconded by Mr. Henry Webbe. Sir Wemyss Reid gives an interesting description of the author at this Club. "Again and again I have heard descriptions of how he used to stand in the smoking-room, his back to the fire, his legs rather wide apart, his hands thrust into the trouser-pockets, and his head stiffly thrown backward, while he joined in the talk of the men occupying the semi-circle of chairs in front of him. . . . To some of us, at least, the Club is endeared by the thought that he was once one of ourselves; that he sat in these chairs, dined at these tables, chatted in these rooms, and, with his wise, far-seeing eyes surveyed the world from these same windows." In the strangers' room at the Reform Club hangs a portrait of Thackeray by Samuel Laurence. On one side of it

The Strangers'
Room, Reform
Club
see page 17

there stands a bust of Sir William Molesworth, on the other of Charles Buller. The latter seconded Thackeray when he was proposed by the Rev. W. Harness as a member of the Athenæum on February 12th, 1846. Thackeray was elected to this Club in 1851 under the rule which provides for the introduction of "persons of distinguished eminence in science, literature, or public services."

**No. 13,
Young Street,
Kensington**
see page 18

In 1846 Thackeray took a house at 13 (now 16), Young Street, Kensington, where he established a home for his daughters. "Vanity Fair," "Pendennis," and "Esmond" were written there. "Vanity Fair" made its appearance in yellow covers, being brought out in monthly parts by Messrs. Bradbury & Evans. The first number was issued in January 1847, the last in July 1848.

When passing his house in Young Street with Mr. J. T. Fields, the American publisher, Thackeray exclaimed, "Go down on your knees, you rogue, for here 'Vanity Fair' was penned, and I will go down with you, for I have a high opinion of that little production myself."

The first number of "Pendennis" appeared in November 1848, but the author's severe illness at the end of 1849 interrupted its publication, which was not concluded until 1850. "Pendennis" was followed by "Esmond" in 1852. Whilst residing in Young Street Thackeray delivered his famous lectures on the English humorists at Willis's Rooms. On page 21 an admirable caricature by John Leech is reproduced from *The Month* representing Mr. Michael Angelo Titmarsh as he appeared in these rooms in his celebrated character of Mr. Thackeray :

**Mr. Michael
Angelo Titmarsh
as he appeared
at Willis's Rooms**
see page 21

Mr. Thackeray, of Vanity Fair, announced a simple course of lectures on a purely literary subject; and for the reason that Mr. Thackeray, living entirely by his pen, was still recognised as a fine gentleman by all—and they were many—who knew him in private, so accordingly his room was filled by an audience as brilliant and fashionable, as intelligent and judicious—in fact, after the lecturer, the agreeable sight of the excellent set of people who gathered about him with such thoughtful attention was really an attraction.

On October 30th, 1852, Thackeray set sail for the United States, where he remained until the spring of 1853. He lectured in various towns—New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, and Richmond amongst others. Upon his return to Europe he made a very short stay in London, and then proceeded to Switzerland, where the story of "The Newcomes" was, according to his own statement, "revealed to him somehow." Much of the novel was written abroad while its author was travelling in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, or staying at the Château de Brequereque at Boulogne, where he is said to have evolved the noble figure of Colonel Newcome. The Château de Brequereque lies pleasantly nestled in trees and shrubberies on the outskirts of the town, and is surrounded by a high wall screening it from public gaze. "The Newcomes" was completed at No. 36, Onslow Square, where Thackeray moved from Young Street in 1857. "The result of my father's furnishings," wrote Mrs. Richmond Ritchie of this residence, "was a pleasant, bowery sort of home, with green curtains and carpets, looking out upon the elm trees of Onslow Square. We lived for seven years at No. 36, and it was there he wrote the 'Lectures on the George's,

**Château de
Brequereque,
Boulogne-
sur-Mer**
see page 20

**No. 36,
Onslow Square,
Brompton**
see page 19

and the end of 'The Newcomes,' and 'The Virginians,' part of 'Philip,' and many of the 'Roundabout Papers.' His study was over the drawing-room, and looked out upon the elm trees."

Thackeray stood for Parliament in the Oxford City division in July of 1857, but was defeated by a small majority. In 1860 he undertook the editorship of the *Cornhill Magazine*, of which Messrs. Smith & Elder had commenced publication in the January of that year. Though continuing to contribute to this magazine until the last, he retired from the editorship in April 1862, doubtless finding the work too exacting for his now failing health.

In the year 1861 the firm of Jackson & Graham built for Thackeray the beautiful house at No. 2, Palace Green, Kensington, which alone of all his homes has the Society of Arts oval commemorative tablet inserted in its wall. An old house stood on the site at the time of purchase, but after careful consideration Thackeray wisely gave up the idea of repairing and adding to it, and erected in its place a fine mansion of red brick with stone facings in the style of Queen Anne. At this period, besides working for the *Cornhill*, Thackeray was writing "Denis Duval," his last book, which remained unfinished. After several severe attacks of illness, the novelist died at his residence in Palace Green on December 23rd, 1863, and was interred at Kensal Green Cemetery on the 30th of the month. The Middle Temple, of which he was a member, requested that they might be allowed to bury him in the Temple, near the grave of Goldsmith. The offer was, however, declined. A bust of Thackeray by his friend, Baron Marochetti, was placed in Westminster Abbey.

No. 2,
Palace Green,
Kensington,
where Thackeray
died

see page 32

The M. S. of
"Denis Duval."

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Thackeray's
Grave at Kensal
Green Cemetery

see page 33

NOTES ON THE PORTRAITS OF THACKERAY

Thackeray was striking in appearance, being over six feet in height and broad in proportion. He was erect in his gait and stalwart in bearing. His countenance was very expressive and capable of much dignity, and his peculiarly sweet smile, combined with a great gentleness of voice and manner, particularly endeared him to children. "Grand and stern and silent," wrote Jerrold of him in later years, "a mighty form crowned with a massive, snow-haired head."

Among the portraits of Thackeray in early manhood is the painting by Frank Stone, executed in 1836 about the time of his marriage with Miss Shawe. This picture has never been engraved.

In 1832 and 1833 Maclise made two beautiful drawings of Thackeray from life, depicting him as a fashionably dressed young man, seated in a *négligé* attitude, displaying a massive eyeglass. These are now in the Garrick Club. Some years later the same artist made another delicately pencilled sketch, which Thackeray himself very skilfully copied.

Of the various portraits by Samuel Laurence, the one of greatest interest is perhaps the chalk drawing executed in 1853 and here reproduced as a frontispiece.

W. M. Thackeray,
from a painting
by Frank Stone

see page 9

W. M. Thackeray
from a drawing
by Daniel
Maclise about
1840

see page 1



